Issue No 40 May 1987

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Hello again,

Well, I'm afraid that we're a few weeks late again with the newsletter. My fault entirely. We'll definitely catch up with ourselves by the end of the year and hopefully, by the time the next magazine is due!

As the 10th anniversary of Bing's passing approaches (yes ten years already!) a number of special things are being planned including the taking of a full page ad in Variety, paid for by the various Crosby fans and clubs around the world and the issuing of special recordings. More about these in the next issue.

You may remember that in the February newsletter, we featured an article on a new production of High Society in the U.K. Well, it turns out that this is a stage production, not a movie, so irate Crosby fans can relax. Thanks to Peter Tatchell who set me straight on this one.

Members have supplied a lot of the material in this edition, for which I am very grateful. Slightly embarassing is the fact that I have in many cases misplaced the names of the donors so I can't give credit where it is due. My apologies to all those to suffer so.

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THE VICTORIAN BING CROSBY SOCIETY
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Vern Taylor leads off the magazine with the final chapter in his well-researched and excellent series, TRANSCRIBING BING which you can read from page 4 onwards. Vern, never one to rest on his laurels, has also initiated another new series which begins in this issue.

Entitled CROSBY PROFILES, it is a series of pen sketches of well-known Crosby collectors around the world. The series kicks off with a look at our old friend Ken Twiss, and, as a surprise to Vern, one on himself. Vern is far too modest to put pen to paper on his own behalf but his friend Bill Osborn is not. The first two Crosby profiles begin on page 43.

Member Danny Keating is well-known to many Victorian members and with good reason. Danny recently had a write up in THE SUN and the article appears on pages 18 an 19.

On page 20, you can see a letter written by Bing to famous jazz man Red Nichols in 1960. An interesting piece of trivia.

The latest issue in THE CHRONOLOGICAL CROSBY series is still not out but it, and the next two or three albums should appear shortly. However, there is an interesting record out. See page 21.

You may not have heard of Maury Foldare but you'll be glad that you did when you read the article on page 25 onwards.

Back in 1958, LOOK magazine ran a feature on Bing's brother Bob. You can read it now on pages 30 - 40.

Club Crosby in the USA has a new President and you know him already! See page 52.

Irving Berlin recently turned 99 and the AGE featured a great write up on America's oldest pop composer. Turn to page 55.

On page 59, we run the final extracts from Sam Coslow's fascinating book "Cocktails For Two". Worth getting a copy if you can find one.

As well as all the above, we have articles on the late Danny Kaye, another Cross(by)word Puzzle, Collectors' Corner and lots more. But as always, let's start off with Future Functions.

FUTURE FUNCTIONS

MONDAY JUNE 22ND - FILM EVENING

Two films will be screened:

ANYTHING GOES

(The 1936 version!)

plus

BROADWAY MELODY OF 1936

The Crosby film stars Bing and Ethel Merman, Charles Ruggles, Ida Lupino, Arthur Treacher and many others.

The Broadway Melody stars Jack Benny, Robert Taylor, Eleanor Powell (her debut in films), Buddy Ebsen, etc.

Venue, as always, is the theatrette of the AMP Building, corner Bourke and William Street, City.

Please arrive BEFORE 7.30 when the show begins so that we can finish on time.

Entry: Members $4, Families $6, Pensioners and Students $2 and non-members $5.

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MONDAY AUGUST 10TH - FILM EVENING WITH THE AL JOLSON SOCIETY

Main features: TWO FOR TONIGHT plus HALLELUJAH I'M A BUM

MONDAY OCTOBER 12TH - FILM EVENING

Main feature: ROAD TO ZANZIBAR

MONDAY DECEMBER 7TH - FILM EVENING

Main feature: WHITE CHRISTMAS

TRANSCRIBING BING

by VERN WESLEY TAYLOR

THE BEGINNING OF RECORDED NETWORK BROADCASTING

> "Norm picked up where Jack left off with us and helped me carry the task we had made for ourselves to its logical conclusion."
>
> (Murdo MacKenzie)

Before he left, Jack Mullin began training a young soundman to take his place. This engineer had worked with the crew since the beginning, five years earlier, and had earned his promotion by becoming the almost indispensible Mixer to Bing that Murdo had become before him. Like Murdo, too, he had started his career with NBC. Nowadays, though retired, he operates his own communications consulting firm in Hollywood. His name was Norman H. Dewes but he was and still is 'Norm' to everybody.

It was the one hundred, forty-sixth Crosby show (108 for Philco, 37 for Chesterfield) and Norm hoped he was ready for it. Of the several members of the profession interviewed for this brief history, not one had a single negative comment to make about him. This is not mere scant praise because he is as he was forty years ago, a quiet person possessed of a touching humility. Murdo said of him, "He was a loyal and true friend to me and he could be a lot of fun, especially when we were out of town with the show, when the job was always a lot tougher on everybody. A thoughtful man, he never forgot such things as birthdays or anniversaries. I have a big bagful of memories of him." Ted Denton, retired Chief Engineer for CBS-Hollywood, said, "Norm was a very methodical guy; efficient. There was no mystery why Murdo thought that he could handle the job."

Dewes performed several other tasks besides tape-editing. He continued operating the mixer-board during recording. "I did everything except the actual recording," he said, "that was always done by a network engineer. The other technical things that were part of my job was the post-production and assembling the final tape." He also set up the stage layout, a task not generally thought of in radio. "I still have a photograph which shows the standard set up. In it you can see where I had the mikes hung or placed around the stage. There's Bing's mike and there's Carp's...there is Mr Trotter's music stand and Buddy Cole's piano or celeste... and the other musician's chairs...there's the guests' chairs, down front and there's the big Chesterfield banner-curtain up on the back wall. It's kind of funny, but I look at that picture and see every spot filled with old friends I worked with."

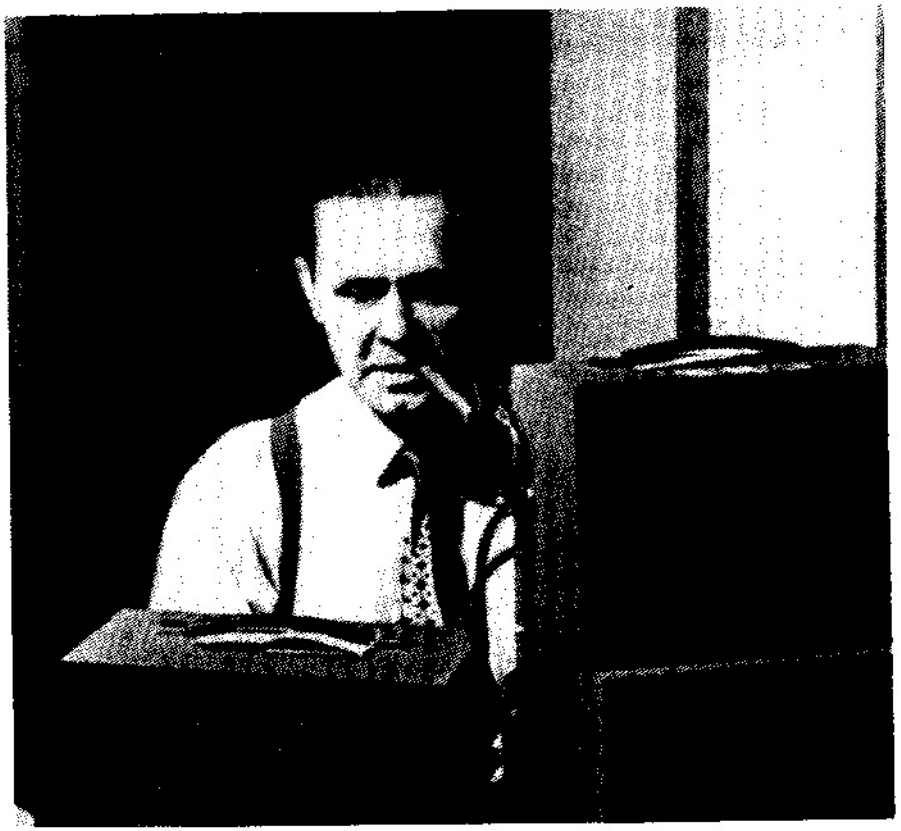
Many long-since famous musicians worked in the Trotter orchestra, among them, Andy Secrest, Manny Klein, Abe Lincoln (the trombonist, not the President), Jack Mayhew, Matty Matlock, Nick Fatool, Slim Taft, Jack Teagarden, Red Nichols.

Wherever the show chanced to be, Hollywood, San Francisco, Spokane, Palm Springs, Chicago, New York or Paris, Bing appreciated a constant layout because it was comfortably familiar and it reduced the jar of changing locations.

Dewes also had the responsibility of the microphones. "Back in the earliest days, even before my time, there were only two or three kinds available. The RCA-44BX and the RCA-77A were the ones we used most of the time." Murdo spoke of even earlier years, "In the Kraft days, RCA made us rent them, they wouldn't sell, which meant we always had to send someone over to pick them up and take them back afterwards. A bother."

"Bing's personal mike was always an especially selected RCA, the 44BX," Norm said. "He had used it since his Kraft period and it was a good one. It was the standard ribbon type but he liked it because it complemented his lower tones. The main characteristic of it was, if you got too close to it, it tended to add bass to your voice, you know; to accentuate the lower vocal frequencies. But it was good for such jobs as interviewing and other two-person work because of its bi-lateral pattern, known as the figure-eight. This made it excellent for chorus work and for exchanges of dialogue because the performers could make use of eye-contact. This encouraged

ad-lib and repartee reactions, and Bing always liked that. No other mike worked so well for him. On top of everything else, it was a rugged instrument; you didn't have to worry about it too much." Today, Bing's old microphone is on permanent display



Norm Dewes (Photo courtesy Norman H. Dewes)

at Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, the location of which, incidentally is the basement in a bank building at Sunset and Vine in Hollywood, almost in the exact spot where many of the Crosby shows were recorded, for this was also once the basement of the old NBC-ABC studios, now long since moved elsewhere.

Dewes is not so favourably impressed with the more modern varieties of microphones that he fails to retain a useful appreciation of the earlier ones. "Yes, there are dozens of different kinds these days. I do assignments with a lot of them but I use some of the old type too. A lot of work is being done with the old RCA-77J and young chorus-singers like the old 44, just like Bing did. Not long ago, some of us went over to Pacific Pioneer broadcasters to listen to some of the old Bing shows. We all agreed that they sounded at least as good, maybe even better than what you can hear now; they are more true, more mellow. It's my opinion that it was the simplicity of it all that did it. The monkeying around they do these days with filters and equalizers and signal processing and enhancement devices, it's too easy for them to over-kill. Too often, they end up with loud, thin, uncomfortable noise. Sometimes I think this industry of ours is advancing backwards."

This quietly voluable technician enjoyed recalling his past. "Lots of times, as you know, we made inserts to Bing's vocals, to improve the show quality or adjust the time or something else. This sometimes meant that we had to to get him to tape extra material for us. He never hesitated to do songs over for us, cold and without an audience. Maybe we would need some spoken lines to stretch a few seconds or the ones we had weren't quite right. Murdo would call him up at home. 'Sure,' he would say, 'come on over,' and we would take some portable equipment and get right out there. We had quite a collection of bits and pieces; things like audience noises and laughter, kept from previous shows. We continually added this sort of thing to our grab-reels. Jack had begun this when he put together the first laugh reel. We had many handy things: song intros by Bing, comments, little reactions, things by Carp. All this stuff was separated on the reels by leader-tape and numbered so that we could locate them. They were used to cover edits and we inserted over re-takes or tracks made without an audience. Murdo got to be pretty good at calling for them by number.

"After a show was taped, we would all get together with him in his office. He would settle down, get everybody quiet and then run off the show. He would listen very closely to everything.

Jack Mullin editing tape on the first AMPEX machine to leave the factory - a pre-production prototype. (Photo: John Mullin)

If a spot seemed to him to need a little sweetening...and that is the very word we use today...let's say a stronger reaction from the audience, he would stop the tape and call out a number. Maybe number #36. He always knew exactly what he wanted and the number of it on the grab-reel. We'd make a note of his request and then he'd go on, down through the show. He not only had that great ear, his memory was surprising. A lot of polishing was done until the show was suitable to Murdo. If it ran over, and they almost always did, there was no problem; we would cut it back here and there or stretch some other place, maybe, to meet the 29:30 minutes.

To put it simply, we built the show every week by starting with Bing's theme-song, then putting in his first number. After that, all the rest would follow: Patter, skits, commercials, guest shots. Naturally, it was not that simple or that easy; it took a heck of a lot of time and effort. Sometimes we might have to work late to get it all down the way it had to be - to be honest about it - the way Murdo said it had to be. When it went out over the air, we used to have fun challenging anyone to detect the splices."

As for the tape editing skills necessary to satisfy the meticulous Co-Producer, Norm says, with an affection and pride that decades have not diminished, "I owed it all to Murdo's demand for excellence and to Jack Mullin, the master of the craft, for teaching me all I know about editing. I am eternally grateful to both."

As it is an any art or craft, the ingenuity of the people who tinker never ceases. It is the purest form of research. To rest on their oars is foreign to their nature. And so, what began as simple but difficult transferring of audio material from one electrical transcription to another, grew to become coded insert-construction, then completely tailored broadcasts. Where would the inventors of such production carry themselves; to what distant worlds would such technology travel?

By the time his final half-hour program series was underway (possibly even some time before), Bing had made professional arrangements with John Scott Trotter's talented pianist, Buddy Cole, that facilitated MacKenzie's task. He began amassing a library of his vocals, employing a small instrumental group,

CBS

operating under various titles (Trio, Quartet, Music, Rhythm, etc) and using Cole's name as the leader and, most often, arranger. Until the end of the half-hour era, they worked with Trotter and then functioned as the music thereafter, usually as an accompaniment to the Crosby songs, both on the air and elsewhere. During the first years, more than five hundred songs were produced, sometimes working directly with Bing, sometimes augmenting already produced numbers. For all the years left for Bing on radio and, in fact, beyond to television and records - years after he was dead, these sprightly, upbeat solos and duets with others, would be used over and over. In later years, many of them formed the nucleus for long-playing phonograph records, with full orchestra melding their rich sound to them. Murdo used them to build all the hundreds of Crosby broadcasts that were to follow.

The technological advances permitted Bing astonishing liberties with reality, singing even as a quartet with himself. Such impressive magic met with the hearty approval of the public, for they,too, were learning the exchileration of the limitless possibilities of tape-work. And yet, it was not reallyvery new at all, for films had long employed multiple-track recording. It was used in Bing's first starring feature, "The Big Broadcast" (1932).

The General Electric Theatre series most often used other singers as guest-stars, usually women, so it was natural for Bing to continue this format in his next series. The non-singing elements of this last 30-minuter likewise was continued. These included bits where the singer and his announcer, Ken Carpenter, became a sort of civil philosophy seminar, discussing various topical minutae. It all sounded rather more like a town-meeting at some local cross-roads than the venerable vaudeville-bill it had always been, but it accomplished its aim of holding Bing before his public at a time when the costlier display was no longer possible on radio. In retrospect, it seems unlikely any other device could have worked so well, so long or so pleasantly at such a dramatic moment of change in broadcasting.

By the final half of the decade, national radio was all but a moribund memory with the death-rattle building up in the wings. While Bing and a few others were sticking it out, most of the medium's other luminaries were doing their turns on television. But the evening Prime Time was being stolen away from radio by its upstart inheritor, and in a flurry of jokes, both silly and cruel ("Radio, the blind man's TV"), second thoughts about the earlier way of being entertained wre being passed around among those who had paid the bills, the sponsors.

Bing was singing as beautifully as ever (some said better) and he seemed convinced his fans had no interest in watching him do it day after day or week after week when they had always been content just to listen for more than a quarter-century. Anyway, he was no longer young enough nor energetic enough nor even very much interested in floundering around in the rough, experimental waters of the new, young medium, where live or wretched eye-stinging kinetoscope was all there was. Jack Mullin, toiling away at his bench far away, had not quite invented videotape. When he had at last done so, it would not be long thereafter before Crosby would go into television with a flourish, including even a series or two.

But not yet, not if he could help it. The water was warm here in radio, working conditions were wonderously better, thanks to Murdo & Company; comfortable and convenient. Pesteringly, like a gad fly, the huge General Electric Corporation, the company that had bought out Thomas Edison's original electric business and would, one day (1985) buy out RCA-NBC, buzzed around Bing's head. As his sponsor, that was their legal right. As Philco before them, they acted as the spur that goaded him to action. In his contract with them, he was bound to appear on 'The Tube', their idea being to keep public interest in his image high enough to coax them to turn on their radios and turn off their TV sets just to listen to the GE Theatre. So, reluctantly, Bing submitted to the heavy pancake make-up and the toupee ("My doily"), the formal attire, the hellishly hot lights, the noise, the tangle of cables on the floor, the jumped-up experts shouting and pointing their fingers in the air - the motion-pictures at the dawn of the 'talkies' (but this time the roles were reversed) back from the grave - did he really have to go through this? He did, but you couldn't tell a thing from seeing him on the tiny flickering black-and-white screen: He was style all the way.

They had all had enough; the GE series closed with Bing at the end of the 1953 season (30 May 1954). During that Summer, Crosby built up his stockpile of 'Bing and Buddy' songs, freshening it up with many examples of the latest pop tunes and more 'golden oldies' and that autumn he opened, again on CBS, as The Bing Crosby Program (22 November 1954), by making this statement: "This is Bing Crosby...You know, were launching this evening a new series of programes, Monday through Friday, a little fifteen-minute filler. We won't attempt anything profound, we're just going to venture a few opinions, have guests from time to time...", and - of course - songs. Intimate and homey; it was the GE Theatre toned 'way down. Still it was just what his fans wanted. Anyway, it was all they were going to get on radio: Bing at the same old stand, singing the same old wonderful chestnuts, as a contemporary Decca LP said and pictured him on its sleeve while offering the very same music inside the record.

Morrow and Murdo in the backroom filling orders, Bing and Carp out front, making sales, all the while ducking in and around Prime Time over on TV. The commercials were multiform and various (soap, soup, shampoo, etc.). It worked, it was successful, it was a good show.

But the money was no longer there and corners had to be cut. John Scott Trotter and his 'tantalizing twenty-six' were lobbed off the stricken budget, leaving a very few behind with Buddy Cole. Late in 1957, the program was reduced to a brisk 5 minutes. It may have been smaller, but it sold bigger products, Ford Automobiles, and was, appropriately titled The Ford Road Show. With him very occasionally but having a Ford Road show of her own was Rosemary Clooney. Carp and Crosby chattered amiably away between the musical offerings. The program ran once, sometimes twice a day.

Television now began claiming Bing though he disliked the bother of it as much as ever. His age also was claiming him a trifle, along with many other distractions but it did not appear to be very insistant. So, he slowed down his pace a little and began travelling more. Murdo and Norm took on other dutites, even entering the TV arena themselves. Then, in a burst of final light, Crosby cranked up a new radio series.

He pumped new blood into the vocals library and then telephoned Bill and Murdo.

Unlike Fibber McGee and Molly who finished their radio career as a three minute discussion with gentle jokery added and no audience, beaming themselves to the lunch-time employees at the Johnson Wax plant in Racine, Wisconsin, Bing went out as a first class act, doing what he had always done and doing it with a good friend, Rosie Clooney.

The Crosby-Clooney Show was as professional a swan-song as anyone had a right to expect. It was happy, spirited, well-written and wasted no time delivering its message. It lasted longer than the other short shows combined; together they all lasted nearly as long as the venerable Kraft show. Crosby-Clooney ran for nearly 700 airings.

Transcribing Bing during this last radio period was a handicrafter's masterpiece. It enjoyed vast popularity in an increasingly pre-occupied television country, bearing out the contention that he was still very popular on radio. It was radio - late radio - at its best, sounding very smooth and soothing, coming into the morning kitchens and evening bedrooms of millions of American housewives, selling more goods than was believed poossible at the time.

Even Carroll Carroll went back to work for Crosby, writing some of the commercials. On more than one occasion, he travelled to the Crosby home to do them. "How many people do you need for this?" Bing asked him, as he opened the door to Carroll and his associates. "In the old days, you were enough all by yourself." Times had changed, production of even commercials had changed; old friends had not, after all.

MacKenzie, long since having the routine down pat, actually assembled everything. He produced what sounded like a genuine presentation out of his snippets of dialogue and music, using a play-dates board hung on his office wall to prevent too close a repetition of the songs. Since Norm had replaced him because his schedule would not allow him to return, it was Bing; Carp, Murdo and Bill of all there once was, still working with Crosby; the first three had been together since the beginning of the now long-forgotten Kraft show, twenty-seven years.

On certain days, when schedules permitted, they might all show up at a studio to work on the music or, as they often did, drive out to Clooney's for several hours of dialogue work, where it was far more comfortable and the food and refreshments were excellent. What could be done in a morning or an afternoon would be spread over many broadcasts. For you and me to listen to dozens of random speech parts, delivered with convincing force and feeling, might provoke surprise and amusement but to these tape-experienced professionals it was all in a days work; the job they did for the money they made. But they were pleasures for our lifetime.

Listening to what was so cleverly pasted together is to defy truth and the evidence oif one's senses. Had history not been working against them there is no telling where Transcribing Bing might have taken them of their pleased audiences. Certainly, radio's replacement has not improved on their work very much, with all the new and wonderful tools available; maybe they have left little to do. It required but three dedicated and determined technicians to do the job assigned to them. Their triumph is still to be heard on magnetic tape, speaking for itself.

Bing Crosby left national radio on September 20th, 1962, ten days later the wonderful medium died. Less than thirty-six yearsafter it began what NBC started on November 16th, 1926, CBS ended it with a pair of soap operas. On that day the doors closed and sealed up what historians are already calling simple development in a continuing story.

Truly, the past is prologue.

(END)

TRANSCRIBING BING - A Postscript

If you have an interest in what went on in radio, behind the scenes, following World War II and would care to hear what they have to say about it, you may write Murdo, Jack and Norm. They will be happy to discuss their Old Days with you. This magazine will see your letters reach them.

Please address all correspondence to the individual or individuals concerned, c/- The Victorian Bing Crosby Society
either in Australia or to your local representative.

C Vernon Wesley Taylor 1986

Baritone knows the lyrics of life

By TOM PRIOR

● Danny Mannix yesterday . . . Australia's Bing Crosby used to pack a wallop.

DANNY (Daniel Mannix) Keating, of North Melbourne, has a singing voice so warm and comfortable it is hard to understand why he is upset when you describe it as "a beery baritone".

"I'm a baritone," Danny said sternly yesterday. "But I have been a teetotaller all my life.

"My Gladdy (Gladys, his beloved wife of 46 years) has a thing about drink.

"She put me on probation for a couple of weeks when we first started courting because she smelled beer on my new brown suit.

"What happened was I had helped a couple of mates of mine home the previous night. They weren't teetotallers.

● **Danny the clean-cut crooner in his heyday.**

"As a matter fact they were as drunk as lords, but what was I supposed to do, leave them in the wilds of Richmond?"

Danny was in even worse trouble when one of his blue eyes was blackened in a fight at the old West Melbourne stadium.

"I fought under a different name so my Mum didn't know," he said. "She hated professional boxing. The eye could have happened in a simple, friendly discussion.

"But I was in real trouble with Gladdy."

Danny was "on probation" for eight weeks until he evened up, but even then, everyone must have known it was a romance and marriage made in heaven.

"I thought Danny was wonderful the first time I saw him," Mrs Keating said. "It was at the Orama Ballroom, in Footscray, and he was singing with the band.

"Everyone seemed to think the clarinet player was the best looker, but he wasn't a patch on Danny.

"Danny won the Victorian Crooning Championship at the Palais Royale Ballroom in 1937 and was acclaimed as 'Australia's Bing Crosby' in the Melbourne Town Hall in 1945, after the War."

Danny, was the Melbourne City Council's Citizen of the Year in 1980 for his years of work with youth groups, particularly in North Melbourne, and his efforts to entertain and comfort the aged.

But yesterday he preferred to talk about what an adventure it was to grow up as the youngest of 16 children in North Melbourne in the 1930s.

"We kids ran an SP book in the lane behind the pub and it was a very lucrative business, I can tell you," he said.

Danny Keating, 69, and Gladys, 68, have a lifetime of happy memories, most precious of all the 13½ "wonderful years" they shared with their birth-damaged son Terry, who died 30 years ago.

They visit Terry's grave every week and dream of him often.

On March 17, "the birthday of Gladys, Terry and St Patrick", Danny gave what he vows will be his last performance.

The $210 he was paid, at $1 a head for the patrons who attended a special luncheon at *Banjo's*, in North Melbourne, lifted the money he has raised in a year for the Tutal Base Hospital, in Bangladesh, to more than $2000.

Why Bangladesh? "Why not?" Danny asked.

The Sun, Thursday, March 26, 1987

Bing Crosby
-Hollywood-

April 26, 1960

Dear Red:

Went down to Palm Springs the other day, and found a package awaiting me there from you. I was dazzled when I opened it. Wait till Wonga sees this - he's going to be livid with envy. I'm going to save it for one of those real big functions at Thunderbird, where I want to come on real strong. Thanks a lot, Red, for thinking of me.

Wonga opened at the Desert Inn a week ago, on the same bill with my three boys. I haven't seen the show yet, but everybody says it's a riot. He took Buddy Cole and a small group up, and augmented them with the regular band there at the Desert Inn. They say he was very nervous opening night, but is now in good form, and is a tremendous success. Now if he could just stay away from those tables, he might bring home some money. They're paying him a fabulous salary.

Hope to see you when you get back -

Warmest regards,

Bing Crosby

BC:lm

Mr. Red Nichols
38543 North 32nd Street E.
Palmdale, California

NEW RELEASES BING SINGS CROSBY Broadway Intermission BR 139

We understand that Mark Scrimger was instrumental in having this unusual new Crosby LP issued. What makes it unusual is that the 14 tracks it contains were all authored in some part by Bing! These range from "From Monday On" (1928) to "African Safari Medley" (1968) while the cover is illustrated with a dozen of the covers from the original sheet music. A most interesting issue.

THE MILLS BROTHERS

From the Beginning (Vols 1,2,3). JSP (UK)

If you're a Mills Brothers fan, you won't want to miss this new series being issued in England. They feature every track (all takes) recorded by the boys from 1931 onwards including early movie songs and rare radio broadcasts. Bing is represented on the first issues on only two or three tracks but more material from radio should turn up as the series progresses.

TIME, MARCH 16, 1987

Pied Piper to Children of All Ages

Danny Kaye: 1913-1987

For some, it was that crazy dance near the end of the 1949 film *The Inspector General*. For others, it was the *Tschaikowsky* song in the 1941 Broadway hit *Lady in the Dark*, when he wrapped his tongue around 57 names of Russian composers in 38 rat-a-tat seconds. Or maybe the exhilarating flying sequence in the *Show* that won an Emmy nomination in 1986. When he died at 74 last week of hepatitis and internal bleeding, with his wife Sylvia and daughter Dena at his Los Angeles bedside, it seemed everyone in America -perhaps the world—had a favorite memory of Danny Kaye.

In his early days it looked as though

Limber of face and graceful: displaying his madcap conducting style in 1981

1947 movie *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. Or the righteousness of a Holocaust survivor protesting a neo-Nazi march in the 1981 TV film *Skokie*. Or the madcap orchestral conducting of a man who could not read music, leading *The Flight of the Bumble Bee* with a flyswatter, cuing the violins with a high kick. Or perhaps the joyous clowning with moppets around the globe as official ambassador of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Even great-grandchildren of his first fans were beguiled by an appearance on *The Cosby*

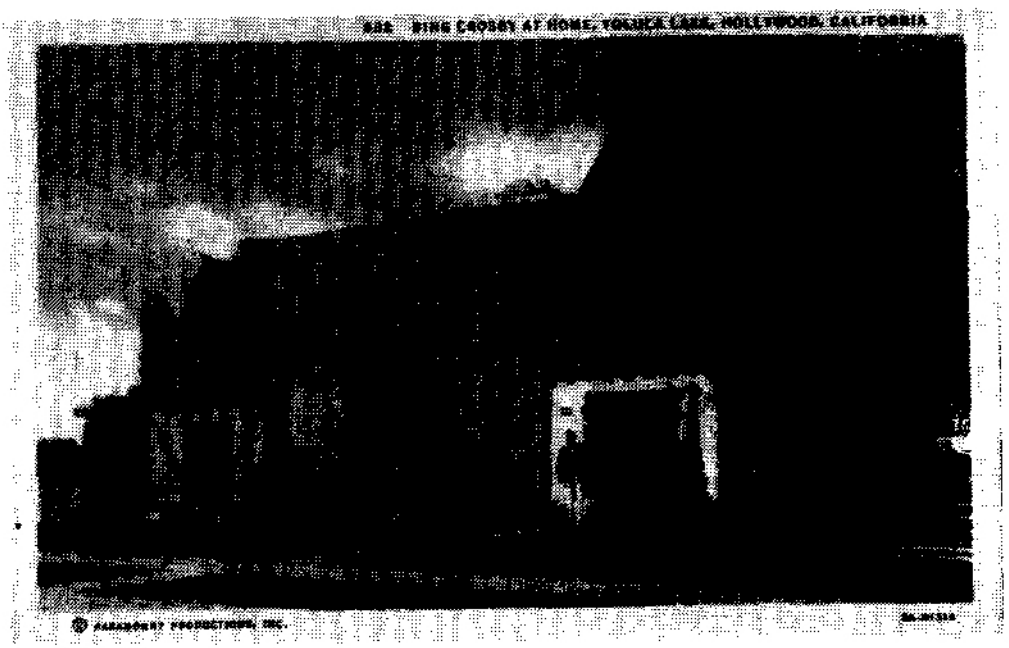
David Daniel Kaminski would be lucky to match the career achievement of his father, a Brooklyn tailor. Hired as an office boy by a dentist who later became his father-in-law, he was fired for using drills to incise blocks of wood. An insurance company sacked him for addition errors that allowed a claimant to run off with a $36,000 excess payout. Even after he broke into show business, Kaye took his bumps and grinds: he lost a job assisting Fan Dancer Sally Rand when he dropped her visual obstacles at an unpropitious

moment. Thus he always resented being termed an "overnight" success at 27. From then on he was never long out of the limelight: he won a special Oscar in 1954, Emmys in 1964 and 1975, the Motion Picture Academy's Jean Hersholt award in 1982 and Danish knighthood in 1983, both for humanitarian efforts, and Kennedy Center honors in 1984.

It was fitting that his most enduring work, more than three decades for UNICEF, was directed at children. His persona remained forever childlike: innocent, questing, bumbling but boundlessly optimistic. That character throbbed with physical but rarely sexual energy. Limber of face and graceful even in pratfalls, he was zany but gentle, making fun chiefly of himself. Offstage, Kaye was someone else. His marriage to Sylvia Fine, who wrote many of his hit songs and comic routines, endured 47 often stormy years. In 1953 she told the New York *Herald Tribune*: "I can't say what Danny Kaye is like in private life. There are too many of him." Co-workers frequently saw him as temperamental, even abusive.

He loved to show off his protean talent. He invited New York City Mayor Edward Koch to dinner and cooked the Chinese meal himself. Barnstorming in 65 cities over five days for UNICEF in 1975, he also flew the plane. As co-owner of the Seattle Mariners, he lectured the team on hitting. In only one pursuit was he content to stand by and watch: having yearned to become a surgeon, he often donned mask and gown to observe. Physicians, like almost everyone else he dealt with, described him as a discerning study who could have joined their ranks. Kaye said he would have preferred that, because it involved helping people. He became an entertainer, he said, not because he wanted to but because he was meant to. About that, there seems little doubt.

By William A. Henry III



RICK CORRALES Los Angeles Times

Longtime Hollywood publicist Maury Foladare poses for a picture he might have dreamed up for one of his clients.

Dean of Hollywood Publicists, 79, Keeps Plugging Away—Honest

By BEVERLY BEYETTE, *Times Staff Writer*

Maury Foladare tipped his golf cap, the blue one bearing the logo of the Crosby tournament at Bermuda Run, N.C. Foladare, four months shy of his 80th birthday and a Hollywood publicist for 56 years, isn't one to let a chance to plug the tourney slip away. And, after all, he's been on the Crosby payroll since Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys were wowing them at the Cocoanut Grove.

It was 1930, Foladare recalled, when he met Crosby. Foladare is an encyclopedia of Hollywood history, a man who not only remembers dates and details but for whom each name evokes another memory, another "Can I tell you a story . . . ."

There was the Louis Armstrong story. It seems a young Armstrong had been making a little whoopee during an engagement in Baltimore and had encouraged two young women to visit him in Los Angeles. To his horror, the women were arriving momentarily—and so was Armstrong's fiancee, Lucille, who had decided to pay a surprise visit.

"Louis told me, 'Pops'—he called everybody 'Pops'—give them $100 apiece and put them back on the train to Baltimore.' "

Foladare pulled it off, even though "I thought they were going to claw my eyes out."

And there was the "King Kong" story. It was 1933 and Foladare, on the payroll of the Fox Theaters chain, had been dispatched to the Pacific Northwest to publicize the classic horror film. "Well," he said, "I got a big guy and rented an ape costume from Western Costume. I had this big ape walk into the Wenatchee (Wash.) Department Store. This one woman fainted. Later, she sued me and the studio (RKO) for $100,000." The matter was settled without the studio having to pay.

And then there was the Gary Cooper story. In 1929, as Foladare tells it, he accompanied a "very bashful" young Cooper to San Francisco for the premiere of "The Virginian" at the California Theater. But Cooper refused to go on stage, pleading stage fright. Some bootleg bourbon negotiated by Foladare through a hotel bellhop did the trick. "I got him on stage and he was there for 45 minutes. I couldn't get him off."

And the Mario Lanza story. It was 1955 and opening night at the New Frontier in Las Vegas for tenor Lanza, the bad boy of MGM. "He got $50,000 in advance," Foladare said, "and never came out on stage." It seems that, as the audience waited, Lanza was in his suite "laid out with champagne, uppers and downers," as Foladare described the scene.

A frantic Foladare dashed across the road to the Desert Inn, where he knew Jimmy Durante was in the house, scheduled to open in a few days. "Jimmy, you speak Italian, don't you?" he asked, persuading Durante to try to reason with Lanza. "We had 110 press people there," Foladare said, but Lanza wouldn't be budged—so

Durante did the show for him. The official explanation: Lanza was ill. Four years later, Lanza died of a heart attack at the age of 38, a victim of obesity, barbiturates and alcohol.

Later, Foladare was able to return Durante's favor, in his role as the chairman of the board for the Los Angeles County Department of Adoptions, interceding in behalf of Durante who initially had been considered too old to adopt a child.

□

Foladare, a native son, wasn't thinking about a career in show business in 1927 when he took a job ushering at the old Tower Theater during the premiere of the first talkie, Al Jolson's "The Jazz Singer." Foladare was a student at USC, thinking of a career as a newsman.

Later, a night job on the Los Angeles Examiner sports desk—at 25 cents an inch—led to a full-time job right out of college, at a whopping $18 a week. When Foladare found out that reporters who had been there for 20 years or longer were getting $29 a week, he figured, "If that's my future, I better get out."

He was hired away by Arthur Wenzel, publicist for a group of theaters including the Morosco and the Majestic. "I thought they were a bit off," Foladare said, "because they hired me for $55 a week." As it turned out, there *was* a catch: "I wouldn't get paid. I'd have to chase them down the street and then I'd get $2 thrown at me. That lasted about five or six weeks.

Through the newspaper job, he had met a number of press agents and, in 1930, Foladare had an offer to become publicity director of the Paramount Theater at 6th and Hill streets, where part of the job would be booking vaudeville acts to run with the films.

Meeting Bing Crosby

It was through the Paramount connection that he met Crosby, who with the Rhythm Boys was doubling nightly at the Cocoanut Grove and the theater. That was a year before Crosby went solo on CBS radio and the road to superstardom.

Through their long association, Crosby frequently led Foladare on a merry chase. "He was a very nice man, but he didn't like publicity," he said. "Often, I'd set up an interview and then I'd find out Bing had gone out the back way and left us there. He couldn't say no, but he would leave everyone in the lurch." Foladare was searching his memory for funny stories about Crosby, with whom he traveled extensively, but concluded, "Bing was not a very funny guy."

In the last 10 years of Crosby's life (he died on a golf course in Spain in 1977), he "mellowed," agreeing to publicity for benefits where he was performing, Foladare said. But many of the singer's good deeds went unnoticed, he said, recalling how Crosby picked up the hospital and surgery bills for one of his gag writers who had fallen on bad times. (His association with the family continues as Crosby's widow, Kathryn, retains Foladare as publicist for the annual golf tournament).

The Crosby association has spanned almost half a century, with Foladare handling television and personal appearances as well as 60 motion pictures.

"It enabled me to make a lot of money," Foladare said matter-of-factly.

But for Foladare this was not an extraordinary client-publicist relationship. Consider that Foladare was with Ozzie and Harriet Nelson for 32 years, with Armstrong for 33 and is now in his 41st year as publicist for Danny Thomas.

Foladare first saw Thomas at Chicago's 5100 Club, where Thomas was a stand-up storyteller making $50 a week. Foladare figured Thomas, who'd begun his career in 1934 singing on a Detroit radio station, was a comer. So, when Thomas came to the West Coast in about 1940 to work with Fanny Brice on radio's "The Baby Snooks Show," Foladare introduced himself. "I said, 'I'd like to do your publicity.' He said, 'OK, let's try it for a while, kid.' We shook hands and that was it."

Meeting the Stars

On reflection, Foladare said with affection, "Danny Thomas did more for me than anyone. I met all the stars through Danny." Later, Thomas in partnership with Sheldon Leonard (T and L Productions) became producer of such TV smashes as "The Andy Griffith Show," "The Dick Van Dyke Show" and "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C." The publicist for all those? Maury Foladare.

And it is Foladare who each year coordinates press coverage for the gala fund-raiser for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., founded by Thomas in 1962. This year's event, a celebration of Danny and Rosemarie Thomas' 50th wedding anniversary, was an intimate sellout affair for 800-plus friends at the Century Plaza Hotel, with entertainment by such stars as Sid Caesar, Tony Martin and Bob Newhart. The net, with additional large donations, close to $2 million.

St. Jude is close to Foladare's heart—he serves on the board of directors—and he delights in retelling the story of how more than 40 years ago a struggling entertainer named Danny Thomas, married and with a child (Marlo) on the way, wandered into an empty Catholic church in Chicago and picked up some literature about St. Jude, saint of the sick and homeless. Thomas, son of a devoutly Catholic Lebanese immigrant family, made a vow that, if his fortunes turned, he would do something to help those people.

It wasn't long before that happened. At the 5100 Club, Foladare recalled, Thomas was discovered by the William Morris Agency, which got him $2,500 a week at New York's Martinique, then $7,500 a week at the Copacabana. Remembering his vow, Thomas turned for advice from Cardinal Samuel Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago, who suggested that he go to a poor section of Memphis and build a hospital where needy children would be treated free. Today that hospital is a seven-story facility with an annual operating budget of $62 million, and a second hospital will be built soon.

Foladare does have one regret about the Thomas association. "I didn't pay any attention to Marlo," he said. "I didn't think she could make it."

□

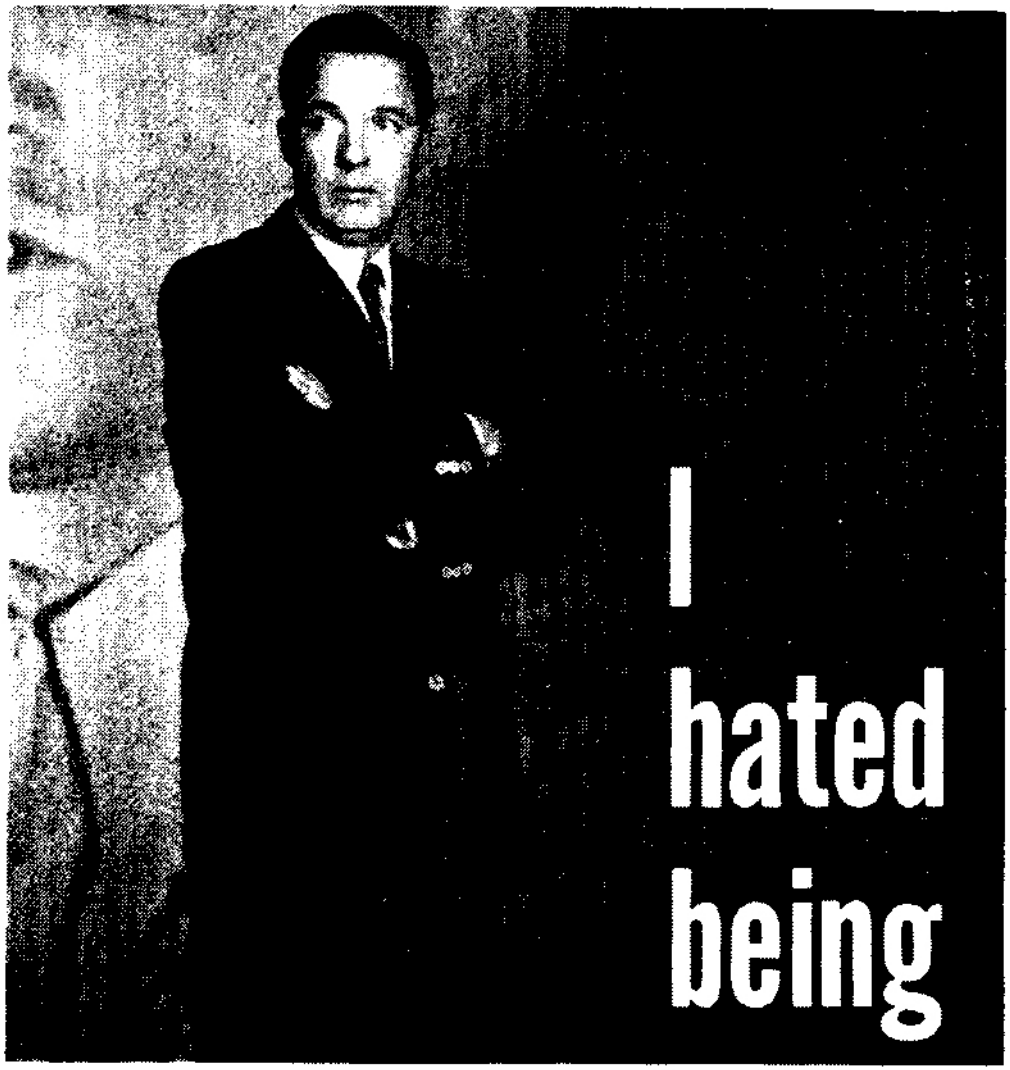
"So darling," the last of the genre—that was one newspaper woman's description of Maury Foladare. "Sweet," another concurred, noting that a mention of a Foladare client in print without fail elicits a *real* thank you note, hand-written often accompanied by flowers

He is, perhaps, a delightful anachronism with a reputation as a straight shooter "I never wrote a phony story in my life," Foladare will tell you.

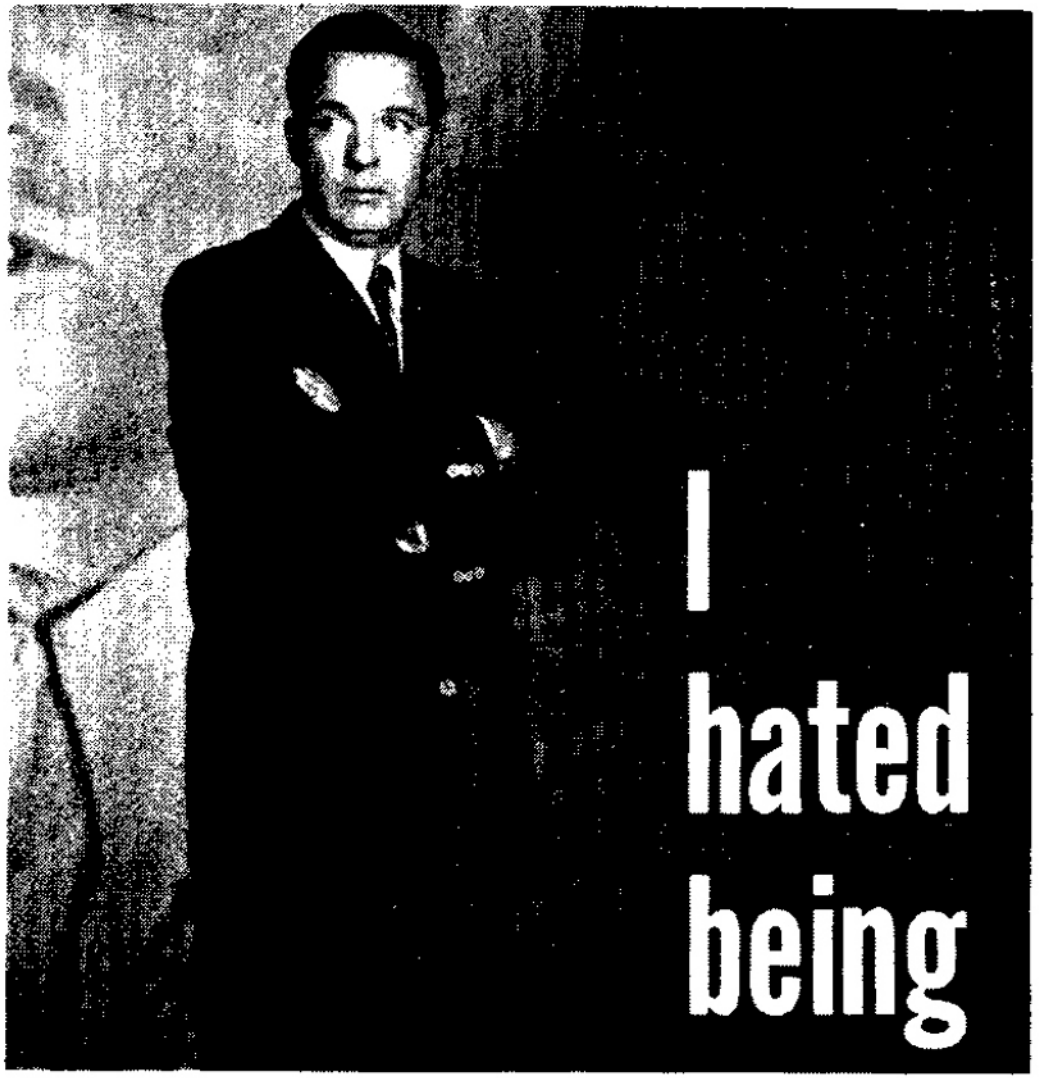
Fortunately for him, many of his clients were what he called "homebodies," honest-to-goodness Ozzies and Harriets who rarely became involved in scandals. "I loved all those people," Foladare said, reeling off names and places from the show-biz past—Billy Gray's Band Box, Gene Austin ("My Blue Heaven" sold 4 million records), Frank Morgan (the "Wizard of Oz"), Jack Haley, Noah Beery, Jack Teagarden, Jack Carson, Rudy Vallee, Judy Canova, Andy Devine, radio's "One Man's Family," "I Love a Mystery" and "Sgt. Preston of the Yukon."

Pushing 80, a milestone he expects to celebrate Jan. 6 at a party to be given by the Masonic Press Club, which he founded, Foladare is "not looking for work." He has Thomas and St. Jude, Kathryn Crosby and the Bing Crosby Golf Tournament, the Hollywood Wax Museum, writer-producer Andrew J. Fenady ("Chisholm") and the Union Plaza Hotel in Las Vegas, where a show opening is reason enough for Foladare to take off for a weekend with a press person or two.

IKE–THE BOY
IS THERE A LADY
LOOK
20¢ JULY 22, 1958
I HATED BEING BING'S BROTHER



Bob never played Bing's records, listened to



I hated being Bing's brother

I'M THE Crosby who thought he wasn't lucky. People always ask me what being Bing's brother has done for me, and I'd like to set the answer down flatly and frankly: It checkmated my career for about 10 years, condemned me to personal despair for at least that long and warped and shriveled me psychologically. None of this was Bing's fault. I suffered from a strange emotional infection I call the "brother complex." This is a story I feel I can tell because now I've had enough success to become immune to any gallery shrieks of "sour grapes."

Ever heard of George Hope, Frank Berle, Freddy Goodman, Harry Jolson or Herb Miller? All talented fellows, they found that, in the entertainment world, the burden of following brothers Bob, Milton, Benny, Al and Glenn was equivalent to lugging a 500-pound pack over the summit of Mount Everest. This "complex" curdles older relatives, too, if the younger is the first to make it big. And it isn't limited to males. It created trouble between sisters Olivia de Havilland and Joan Fontaine and made actress Maria Riva suffer for years because her mother was named Marlene Dietrich. Nor is it a bugaboo confined to show business. Any member of a family that has been touched with a smidgen of glory is susceptible to it, whether his or her successful kin is scientist, surgeon, senator or merchant prince. I even know the son of a butcher who became an introvert because he couldn't cut a slice of bacon as thin as his dad.

By BOB CROSBY

Bob never played Bing's records, listened to his radio shows or saw his films

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Bing's brother

By BOB CROSBY

to his radio shows or saw his films

Psychologist Raphael H. Rhodes has reported that "the adjustment to the fame of a close relative is a serious and common, yet little discussed, problem in American society." One symptom of this "brother complex," if I am any true barometer, is that adult victims tend to behave like asinine juveniles. Once, for instance, my band, the Bobcats, was booked to play a dance hall in the South. We were greeted by a large sign the dance-hall owner had thrown up: "Tonight, See the Bobcats, Led by Bing Crosby's Brother." I charged into the impresario's office, spitting mayhem. "Get rid of that sign or I quit right now," I screamed. Shocked, he asked, "What's the matter? Aren't you really Bing's brother?" I didn't answer, just slammed out the door. The Bobcats pulled me off an outgoing train, then got the promoter to rip down the sign, even though he insisted it would cut the box-office take by $1,500. As if in retribution, he vanished with the payroll when our booking was up.

It used to gall the life out of me to have people seek me out after a show just to see if Bing had come to visit or to ask me to mail them Bing's picture. There was the time in New Orleans when I was shooting golf on a public course and suddenly found myself mobbed by over 500 screaming youngsters. Somehow, they'd gotten the idea that Bing was playing. When I began signing autographs as *Bob* Crosby, the crowd dispersed like snowflakes in a teeming rain. I walked off the course and sulked in my hotel room for the rest of the day. I've always been daft about golf and can play it as well as Bing, yet I couldn't enjoy the game for several years because I felt that it was "Bing's game."

As most people know, the seven Crosby kids—Larry, Everett, Ted, Bing, Catherine, Mary Rose and myself—were brought up in Spokane, Wash. Dad worked as a bookkeeper in a pickle factory. And mom—well, the class of 1776 had nothing on Kate Harrigan Crosby when it came to teaching rugged independence. "God gave each of you two feet and I want you to stand on 'em!" she used to say. We all worked our way through school by taking after-hours jobs. When I was six, Bing was deputized by mom to teach me how to swim. His approved method was to give me a few basic lessons, dump me in a lake, and say, "O.K., kid, now swim." Then he'd loll on the beach, croon, "Boo-boo-boo-boo," and act as if he had wax in his ears when I screamed, "Hold me or I'll drown!" I didn't drown. Instead, I learned to swim faster and better than all the other kids.

Bing left home soon after that, and for many years, our relationship was limited to fleeting visits, picture post cards and old uniforms from the Paul Whiteman band, which he sent by parcel post and which fitted me like an Army tent. When he hit the golden lode, I felt terribly proud because he was my brother and terribly awed because he became a sort of distant god. His sudden rush to fame blurred all my early lessons in self-reliance. I was interested in show business too, and I got the half-baked idea I could now make the big green without bothering with such details as a long apprenticeship, hard knocks and hard work. All I had to do was trot out the magic name.

Well, the name got me the jobs all right. I was a fresh-faced kid of 15½, with my experience limited to singing in amateur shows and in high-school socials, when bandleader Anson Weeks took me on as vocalist. The salary was a king-sized $100 a week. When I left home to join the Weeks band in San Francisco, dad took $25 out of a teapot he had cached in a kitchen closet and handed it to me for railroad fare. Then, he gave me some parting advice. "Son," he said, "it'll cost you $12 a week for room and $9 for food. Figure $4 for laundry and keeping your shoes shined. Tips will be $2. That leaves $73. Send me that and I'll put it in insurance for you. Before you know it, you'll have enough paid in to borrow on."

I didn't send dad any money for the first two weeks. I used it for a high old time instead, figuring there'd be plenty more where those $100 bills came from. But at the end of those two weeks, the spigot ran dry—Weeks tossed me out on my ear.

Other bandleaders hired me and then fired me with similar revolving-door speed. They thought they were hiring another Bing—a faultless, finished performer—and they expected so much of me that I couldn't possibly deliver. Discouraged, I went down to Hollywood to look up Bing.

"Can you give me some professional singing lessons?" I asked. "I guess that's all I need to make good." Bing settled back on his couch, looked at me thoughtfully and said, "Keep your nose clean, kid." That was my singing lesson.

I tried my luck on Broadway, but word was already out that the junior Crosby was no senior Crosby. Broke, I wired Bing, asking for a loan. His answering wire read: "You can't reach me, regards, Bing."

Gretchen Wyler and Bob run through a comedy song for *The Bob Crosby Show*, which takes over Perry Como spot on NBC-TV this summer.

Bing never got any jobs for me, never opened important doors, never advised me on bookings, rarely came to see me perform. I didn't realize that he was doing me a favor; that he wanted me to gain the self-confidence and the enduring success that comes when you build it yourself, brick by brick. All I saw was cold disinterest in me and my career, and it inflamed emotions already painfully chafed. From a feeling of brash overconfidence, I skidded to the other extreme and wrapped myself in a cloak of inferiority and self-pity.

The fact that I resembled Bing in appearance, mannerisms and voice only compounded my sense of frustration. I was haunted with a double-edged phobia: first, that my inadequacies as a performer would shame the great legend Bing had created; and, second, that I would always be falsely suspected and resented for riding on my brother's coattails. That was why I chose to be a bandleader. They could say Bing was a better singer than I, but they couldn't say he had a better band. By gosh, I was going to top him at something!

While "sippin' sodas" at Charlie's Tavern, I met a covey of hepcats who'd been tootling away evenings in a musty New York basement. Gil Rodin organized them as the Bobcats, with myself as nominal leader. During the next seven years, we were jazz-mad gypsies, roaming the country to play dance halls, picnics, carnivals and cabarets.

Throughout this period, I never talked about Bing in public and almost never in private. I never went to his movies, played his records or listened to his radio shows, because I didn't want to take the chance of copying his style, even unwittingly. I insisted on contracts that stipulated, "Not to be publicized as Bing's brother." My brooding habits, my frequent sulk periods and my emotional flare-ups gave me a reputation as a loner.

For all the experience and savvy I picked up with the Bobcats, I found myself in a professional rut. I sang along with the band, but insisted on being regarded as just a cog in a group act. I refused to make with the pleasant chatter and would not allow myself to project as a personality. In my frantic efforts NOT to be like Bing, I unconsciously changed my natural singing style for the worse.

No one could ever accuse the U. S. Marine Corps of running a social-service mission, yet the marines were the boys who finally got me back on the track. In 1943, during World War II, I found myself wearing a lieutenant's bars in Hawaii. With no USO acts around, I was deputized to collect some serviceman talent and put on a series of

Bing and Bob (with Gary, above) seldom saw one another early in Bob's career.

shows for the 5th Marine Division. I used the same routine as with the Bobcats. But even though we were the only act playing the sand dunes, we didn't exactly stand the audience on its ear. One day, one of my senior officers buttonholed me for some blunt talk. "I get the feeling you're always holding back when you perform," he told me. "How come? The boys think it's mighty strange you never talk about Bing."

Embarrassed, I tried to explain about my "brother complex." "Why, that's ridiculous!" the officer snapped. "The marines don't give a hoot about your pedigree, good or bad. President Roosevelt's son is in the Marine Corps, but he doesn't rate special privilege, nor do we make it extra tough for him, either. We judge a man only by what he is and what he can do. All we ask is that you give us everything you've got, whether you're firing a bazooka or doing a show. Think it over, Crosby, and you'll see I'm right."

I thought it over all that night and all the next day. When I came out to do the next show, my opening remark was: "Hi—I'm Bob Crosby. I'm the one without Hope." It got a howl. Then, I poured out quips about Bing. And I sang the way I'd sung only in showers, when nobody was listening and my inhibitions were down—loud and clear, like a man who likes his voice and doesn't feel it has to be buried under a torrent of orchestration.

I did a hundred more shows for the marines on Pacific islands, and every one of them was a touch of elixir. Despite all my fears, nobody accused me of being a copycat, a poor man's Bing. I learned that when a marine told you, "Hey, you're almost as good as Bing, and that's smash-hitting in any league," he wasn't expressing sarcasm or fluff. These were straight sentiments, the kind you could, and should, accept with pride. Once I stopped fighting mental scarecrows, I became a warmer, more relaxed, outgoing person. While the marines were winning the big war in the Pacific, I was finally winning the small war over myself.

When I came home, my wife, June, who had suffered my phobias ever since our marriage in 1938, noticed the change immediately. She encouraged me to reorganize the Bobcats, this time with a leader who had no intention of dousing his light under a bushel.

The results were heartening. We got better bookings than before the war and made a number of successful recordings. One night, a CBS executive heard me at a benefit and signed me as singing star and emcee of the *Club 15* radio show. Cynics insisted the public would never accept TWO Crosbys on the air waves, yet, before long, *Club 15* was one of the most popular programs of its kind. On top of that, Jack Benny signed me as a regular on his radio and TV program at $3,000 an appearance. In 1953, CBS put me in charge of my own TV store five afternoons a week. And now I'm subbing for Perry Como.

I'm really the lucky Crosby. And with this realization, I am able to be of some help to other people. Dozens write me each week, complaining of their own "brother complex" or "sister complex" or "father complex" or "mother complex," and asking, "Bob, how do you lick it?" Briefly, I tell them this:

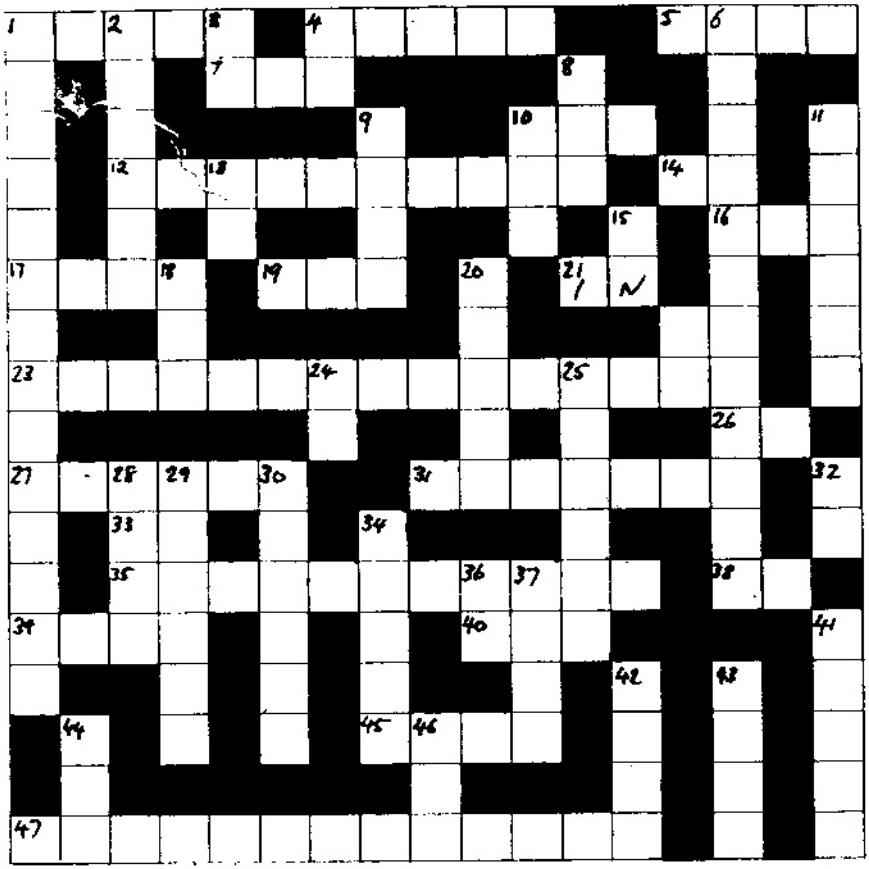
Don't trade on your kin's reputation, but don't crawl into a hole either. Learn to accept the relationship, and others will end up judging you for yourself, which is what you want. Exploit your talent and your

Both Crosbys now enjoy golf. For many years, Bob avoided playing, because he felt it was "Bing's game."

opportunities to the hilt. Know your limitations and be satisfied with whatever objectives you can achieve. You're not in any contest with your famous or successful relative, so stop worrying about finishing second or third best. It doesn't matter if you don't do as well materially—all you want is to be happy in your own way.

It's a problem that once seemed hopelessly insoluble to me—until I stumbled onto the surprisingly simple way out. END

CROSS(BY)WORD No 3 - by Diana McKie



ACROSS

1. Dixie's real first name
4 across + 2 down: Bing's real names.
5. Bing's mother's name.
7. I'll ... you in my dreams.
10. Are you a ... of Bing?
12. Director of Going My Way.
14. .. had to be you.
16. Ho ...
17. Between a .... and a sigh.
19. Bing often wore a ...
21. .. a Little Hula Heaven

22 (across & down) My girl's an Irish girl.
23. Movie in which Bing sang a love song to a bear!
26. You .. to my head
27 across + 30 down: Movie in a troop of monkeys featured.
31. Venue of the third 'Road' movie.
33. Double .. Nothing
35. Bing's daughter
38. .. Would I
39. The First ....
40. ... Man River
45. I'll .... you home again Kathleen.
47. Movie in which Bing played a journalist seeking his son in war-torn France.

DOWN

1. Movie in which Bing introduced first million selling song.
2. See 4 across
3. It might .. well be Spring
4. Bing, oh how .. could sing
6. Cole Porter musical Bing filmed twice.
8. Moonlight ...
9. .... singing featured in many early Crosby recordings
10. ... can compare with Bing
11. The sarong girl
13. By the light .. the silvery moon
15. Bing's male co-star in 'Here Come the Waves'. (inits)
18. ... loves me not
20. First radio sponsor on CBS
24. Road .. Hongkong
25. For a White Xmas it has to have .....
28. Baby won't you please .... home
29. The Rose of .....
32. I'm ..body's baby
34. Kathryn ..... Crosby
36. Same as 32 down
37. You know about Bing if you can solve each .... here.
41. First instrument Bing played.
42. .... for you
44. Sweetheart of Sigma ...
46. ...thing goes

(SOLUTION - PAGE 62)

****
CROSBY COLLECTOR PROFILES
****

by

Vernon Wesley Taylor

First in a long series of brief monogrpahs on some of the Bing Crosby music collectors whose endeavours have perpetuated and preserved the canon.

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Vernon Wesley Taylor

KEN TWISS

Those who collect and enjoy the music of Bing Crosby my be divided easily into two classifications: Early and The Rest Of Us. Strangely, from this arrangement springs most of the likes and interests we hold regarding our worldwide hobby. Few are numbered among the first category but L. Kenneth Twiss is most certainly one of them, for he began acquiring the gramophone records in the early 'thirties. As for the reasons we all possess that started us on our quest, there might well be as many as there are collectors. Mr Twiss' is possibly the basic one, "Because I enjoy hearing Bing sing," he has often said. If there is a more underlying reason for him it is undoubtedly necessary for the world to know. Bing has served as father and brother figure for many an otherwise deprived but happy listener before and since.

So, over the years as a young and then a middle-aged man, Twiss filled the small home in which he lived with his mother, with Bing's records (his father died before Ken could know him). Her kind-hearted indulgence was not an insignificant sacrifice. Besides the room-space, she had to share her son with Bing, who, without his becoming aware of it, had totally captivated the youngster. The records spun like children's tops every evening and weekend. Often, playmates sat on the front porch steps enjoying the impromptu concerts.

Eventually, the boy acquired all the 78's, on their many varied and colourful labels. Cabinets and shelves bulged their sides to accomodate them. He grew up blissfully undisturbed by many of the more ordinary pitfalls of adolescent life that besieged his neighbourhood chums and then went off to join the Navy when he was asked to contribute what he could toward righting Adolph Hitler's wrongs. When he returned home to his Northwest Corner, he became a restaurant chef, specializing in delicious pastries. His hobby resumed. By this time, the 'forty-fives' and the 'LP's' joined the stacks. Living-space rapidly lost ground to storage space.

As if this were not enough, another drive had developed inside the Twiss head, an impossible dream that eventually dwarfed his collecting accomplishments. While other ambitious sorts were managing to grow beyond their hobby by releasing unusual Crosby voclas or producing even more 'print-material' on the singer, Ken had in mind something infinitely more difficult.

He actually approached old age and was almost retired before his plans began to take shape. His mother was now dead and most of his friends were scattered. He lived alone in the house in which he had grown up in. Even the town he dwelled in, Tacoma, had all but gone to seed, turning into a 'bedroom suburb' of the large city to the north, Seattle. His job, developing so many responsibilities, began to demand all his time and energies. He was driven to do the unthinkable, give away his Crosby collection! Tacoma's library received it graciously, making it a part of their permananet recording-section. But at last he had the time and the room to begin his Bing Crosby Historical Society.

Naturally, new difficulties started immediately. Because he had always been a quiet, almost shy person, he had little inclination toward incessant persuasion - imperative for the task he had in mind - by telephone, letters and speeches.

He discovered problems he did not know existed. Where to start? Who to approach? Bing? Of course, Bing, but not before he had something more concrete to offer than a mere idea. Twiss was very aware of Crosby's practical turn of mind and did not wish to lose his cooperation before he had it.

He started by discussing it with acquaintenances in town and far away, with other collectors and with local businessmen. He was so determined, he phoned this writer then drove the one hundred and forty miles south to bounce his thoughts of him, as it were. Wherever he went and whomever he saw, he found eager helpers. Soon he had built a nucleus around which he could develop his old dream: An office, a display room, a newsletter. Out of such endeavours he devised an annual get-together for Society members. This festival became the "Tribute to Bing in Tacoma'. Before all this ocuild get underway, however, the news from Spain that Bing had died shocked Ken into frozen motion.

But not for long. More than ever, he meant to succeed. If Bing was now beyond reach, the job would become much more difficult but it would not become impossible. The Twiss reticence changed into a firm pattern of persuasion; the shy individual became a hard-sell salesman. Hundreds of letters went out to likely prospects, including America's President and Great Britain's Queen. Politicians at all levels were not immune, nor were entertainers, workingmen and women, educators, lawyer...
The first record issues were announced, Al Rinker was invited to be the guest-of-honour at the first Tribute dinner and, best of all, plans were begun to start the Birthplace Fund. That 'manse' as Bing once called it will become, one day, the Society's international headquarters. Even Tacoma began bustling with fresh, new civic growth, with 'BCHS' an important part of it. Washington State is expecting the Society to do its share in promoting its centennial by utilizing another Twiss notion: A travelling exhibit illustrating American Showpeople born within her borders. You won't need three guesses to learn which of them will be the most prominantly featured.

In less than the ten years since its inception, hundreds of collectors and just plain ordinary folks over the world have met in Tacoma many times over to talk of Bing to one another. They have eaten Chef Twiss' inspired dinner creations, drunk fine

wines, watched Bing films and television programs and generally relaxed into a happy assembly. Even a number of Bing's friends and relatives have been honoured at the functions and then joined in the celebration. The one sad note is that Bing did not live long enough to join them.

The Event this year came in early May (1987), exactly on Crosby's birthday. Those of us fortunate enough to attend, once more, met formerly distant strangers but now old friends and listened to The Music and even endured a few tired old wheezes which the master-of-ceremonies, Mr Bill Osborn was unable to prevent. We toasted the strong will and courageous spirit of Ken Twiss, who despite many handicaps did not lose sight of his goal. He has made his seemingly impossible dream come true...for all of us.

(Vernon Wesley Taylor; Portland, Oregon, 1987)

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VERNON WESLEY TAYLOR

Vernon Wesley Taylor of Portland, Oregon has undoubtedly contributed more to the research of Crosbyana than any other Bing collector.

Vern became a Bing fan when only eleven years of age. He became a serious Crosby collector in 1945. I said "serious". I believe it would be more correct to substitute the word "fanatic" as an adjective for his type of Bing collecting.

Mr Taylor used an ingenious method for filling out his Crosby record collection. He found out that many people he was dealing and trading with also collected jazz records. His nimble brain reasoned that if he had a jazz treasure that some of these parties wanted he could perhaps horse trade with them for a Crosby disc

that he needed for his own collection. These "Taylor-trades" became the means by which Vern completed his Crosby record collection years sooner than he would have by more regular methods. Everyone involved benefitted. As for Vern, he also learned to develop a great love for jazz music, its instrumentalists, its vocalists and also, its most interesting history. However, shortly after makig great inroads into securing his, then, nearly complete Bing collection, tragedy struck and almost wiped out his family, home and all their worldly possessions. The area in which the Taylors resided, Vanport, Oregon, was hit by a flash flood late in the 1940's. Vern's primary concern, of course, was for the safety of his family. As soon as all were accounted for and safely deposited on high ground, Vern returned to his home that was rapidly being destroyed by the power of the swirling waters. Alas, the Taylor home was soon a thing of the past, but not until our man had returned and rescued his prized record collection. Good boy! Almost everything else, however, was a total loss.

Not only does Vern possess one of the few compete Bing Crosby record collections in existance but he has hundreds of tapes of Bing's numerous radio and TV shows, plus sound tracks of all of the groaner's motion pictures.

Vern though, is even more unique as a contributor to all this Crosbyana. In any given month, Mr Taylor is on the phone talking with dozens of other collectors. He corresponds with people requesting information on Bing and even travels to different cities and states to aid others in their pursuit of information on H.L.C. Because of this dedicated life style, over the years, Vern has amassed data information on Der Bingle that must surely be second to none. His name and knowledge are indeed known world wide. England and Australia are two areas that constantly contact this man concerning upcoming LP's and request that he write Crosby articles for various magazines, newspapers, etc. He is most respected by other collectors.

Vern is a professional writer. He began as a young lad by writing articles of general interest for public school and local newspapers. It wasn't too long before his talents found their way into numerous national magazines. Many of you collectors have undoubtedly read with great relish the in-depth treatment of the article "Hail KMH"

which appeared in several editions of "The Crosby Voice". It is soon to appear in book form. Another lengthy, but most interesting story entitled "Transcribing Bing" also appeared in recent editions of the magazine. Both of these articles were penned by our Vernon Wesley Taylor.

A book that came out in 1981 caused much controversy. Authored by Donald Shephard and Robert F. Slatzer, it was titled "Bing Crosby - The Hollow Man". For all of us who have loved and admired Bing for most of our adult years, that was a book that was nauseating to say the least. No, Vern did not contribute to the nauseation, but he was contacted numerous times by the authors to draw on our man's expertese on matters Crosby.

Previously it was mentioned about Vern's fabulous Crosby record collection. Over and above the regular commercially cut Crosby records in this collections are hundreds, nay thousands, of very rare items, such as alternate and rejected masters, songs that were done by Bing at special gatherings, parties, etc. Because of this, Vern has been contacted many, many times over the years, by people seeking permission to include such off-beat items on upcoming LP's. In almost all cases, Vern cheerfully has allowed such items to be used. He is most generous in allowing others to share in his collection. His attitude seems to be "sharethe wealth". Also he has contributed many liner notes for various LP's.

In radio, especially around the Portland area, Vern's talents are much sought after. He acted as special consultant for input for the weekly one hour show "The Crosby Years" that ran for 41 weeks. He contributed data and the loan of his recordings for "Fifty Fabulous Years" that aired for 26 weeks. Vern did the same for "The (New) Crosby Years" which was also a weekly one hour radio series, running 26 weeks. Currently, this busy man is involved with National Public Radio concerning the possibility of initiating some new radio series featuring various entertainers.

Ah yes, lest I forget, Mr Taylor is one of the founding members of The big Crosby Historical Society.

So much for the accomplishments of this truly amazing person. What kind of individual is this man? What traits make up his personality? One can readily see, by reading this profile so far,

that Vern is a workaholic. That's right. He is, up to a point. He actually likes to have a project going at all times, whether it be something pertaining to Bing, maybe repairing his home, or just starting a totally new project of some kind. On the other hand, he can sit back and relax and chat with friends by the hour. He is a great conversationalist and a fine racanteur. Also he possesses a spontaneous sense of humour whether it be regular or of the blue variety. Mostly, though, his face takes on a solemn look. This, I believe, is not because he is that serious, but because he is thinking of the next bon mot that he is gonna lay on ya. On any special occasions, such as a warm handshake, he has been known to jolt the jug with a close friend or even a casual acquaintance.

Presents are something he loves to bestow on friends. I've said many times and it's so true: "To know Vern Taylor is to experience Christmas any day of the year." Vern has a very active mind and loves top keep it that way through all his waking hours. Many times he will start ona topic, think of something else, as take off on a totally different vein. Numerous times his wife, Molly, will cry out, "Whoa there, boy, you're off on a tangent again. Back to the main road!" Speaking of Molly, unlike many of the wives of other Crosby collectors who have no interest in Crosby films or recordings, she is definitely interested in her husband's hobby. She has been a great aid over the years in helping out in innumberable ways. Bless her. She's a darling girl.

Vern is very personable and makes friends easily. He gives the impression of being affable and sincere, all of which is true. A person meeting him for the first time is almost instantly aware of these traits of his personality.

For some time, Vern has made a comfortable living by working as a liquor broker. He has been semi-retired for the last couple of years and intends to become fully retired in the next few months. This can mean only one thing. Vern will have even more time to devote to his writing, his collecting and to meet and cultivate more new friends.

(William R. Osborn - Seattle, Washington. 1987)

TRADING POST

Frank Walsh, Fishing Haven, River Road, Palmer's Island, NSW 2460

is after the following Crosby movies on VHS:

Here Is My Heart, Anything Goes (1936), Pennies From Heaven, Road to Zanzibar, Top O' The Morning.

Frank is prepared to pay or exchange to get the films he wants.

Jack Souther, 2011 44th Ave, San Francisco, California 94116, USA

wants TWO copies of the John Joyce LP (Bing on the Box) reviewed in the last issue of The Crosby Voice. Shouldn't be too hard to find.

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THINGS FOR SALE
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LP's at a discount

Members of the Victorian Bing Crosby Society can obtain discounts on records (Crosby and otherwise) at The Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre, 348 Centre Road, Bentleigh (ph 557 1050). Ken Henderson is the man to see.

Colour Photos of Bing

Frank Murphy operates the Bing Crosby Photo Club in the UK and issues many colour photos of Bing every year to members as well as a regular 30 pp news bulletin. For the latest annual rates, write Frank: 32 Ferndale Ave, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear, NE 28 7 NE.

Bing on cassette

Arnold Baker, 48 Groomsport Rd, Bangor, Co Down, Northern Ireland BT20 5LR, has over 100 different Crosby cassettes for sale, covering just about every subject you can imagine. Well worth investigating.

Bing Discography

If you have even a small collection of Bing records, you must have a copy of 'Bing Just For the Record'. It lists every Crosby record from 1926 - 77 in order. For details, write to John Joyce (Bookbinders), Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE28, AH3. UK.

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OTHER CROSBY CLUBS
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Around the world, there are a number of other Bing Crosby Associations, all worthy of your support.

THE BING CROSBY HISTORIAL SOCIETY, Ken Twiss, President, PO Box 216, Tacoma, Washington 98401, USA.

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE, Reg Bristo, Sec/Editor, 7 Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran, Gwent NP 44 4 PJ, U.K.

THE BING CROSBY COLLECTORS SOCIETY, "Bingville News", John Bassett, 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex, SS4 1RZ, U.K.

THE NEW BING CROSBY PHOTO CLUB, Frank Murphy President, 32 Ferndale Avenue, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear, NE28 7NE, England.

BING'S FRIENDS & COLLECTORS SOCIETY, Larry Gunn, President, 170 Terminal Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94205, USA.

KATHRYN CROSBY CLUB, Caroline Dawson, Pres, 1374 Broadway, 7-D, West Sommerville, MA 02144 USA.

CLUB CROSBY, Mark Scrimger, President, 314 East Main St, Parma, Michigan 49269, USA.

A NEW PRESIDENT FOR THE CLUB CROSBY

After several years of stirling work, Al Sutton has stepped aside as President of the Club Crosby in the USA, the oldest, continuously active Crosby organization in the world!

Al's replacement is a man with whom we are all familiar - MARK SCRIMGER - the Victorian Bing Crosby Society's own representative in the USA. We wish Mark well with his new appointment and look forward to closer co-operation between our two groups.

Wayne L Martin takes over as editor of BINGANG, the Club Crosby's regular magazine which regularly features original articles on Bing and things Crosby.

Membership to the US Society is US$10.00 p.a. in America and US$15.00 for overseas. Treasurer of the club is Merril Willsohn, PO Box 8283, Sacramento, California 95818, USA.

COLLECTORS' CORNER

We first featured these unusual and attractive labels on these pages several years ago. But as we have added many new members since then, we thought that they deserved another go round.

The releases were exclusive to Brunswick in the U.K. and were limited to early pressings. Later copies feature the more familiar black and gold Brunswick label.

The practice of releasing photographic labels does not seem to have been confined to Crosby issues alone. I have a couple of other U.K. Brunswick records in my

collection featuring a similiar treatment, including one by Carmen Miranda.
Perhaps one of our members would like to supply further information on the subject for these pages.

The Mr America of music

THE AGE, Monday 11 May 1987

IN A LETTER to Alexander Woollcott half a century ago, Jerome Kern offered what may be the last word on the significance of Irving Berlin, who turns 99 today. "Irving Berlin has no PLACE in American music," wrote Kern. "He IS American music." And today that assessment still rings true, in spite of the fact Berlin has remained professionally silent for 25 years.

That quarter-century has seen profound changes in the way popular songs are created. Designed for records, modern pop music is now more of an aural than a written tradition. And American pop, instead of refining its own identity, is reaching out to Latin America, Africa and India for refreshment.

At the same time, Irving Berlin's songs sound as fresh today as when they were written. The latest reminder of the continuing vitality of Berlin's work is a new album, 'Remember', by the superb young singer-pianist Michael Feinstein. 'Remember' collects 19 Berlin songs that go as far back as 'Alexander's Ragtime Band', the epochal hit that established his songwriting career in 1911 at the age of 23. Besides such Berlin standards as 'How Deep Is the Ocean' (1932), 'Always' (1925) and 'Puttin' on the Ritz' (1930), it includes such relatively unknown gems as 'What Chance Have I With Love?' from the 1940 show 'Louisiana Purchase' and 'Better Luck Next Time' from the 1948 movie 'Easter Parade'. The record is a delicious tribute from a singer whose heartfelt simplicity of delivery matches the spirit of the songs.

The quality that Kern recognised as the essence of Berlin is a faith in the American vernacular so profound that today the composer's best-known songs seem indivisible from the country's history and self-image. Where the songs of Kern, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Cole Porter brought together Afro-American, Latin American and rural strains of pop with the elegance of European operetta, Berlin's music did not strive to be lofty in that way. The best of it is a simple, exquisitely crafted street song whose diction feels so natural that one scarcely notices the craft.

Irving Berlin in 1938: turns 99 today.

Scanning Berlin lyrics, one rarely lingers over ironic turns of phrase, elaborately clever rhymes or double entendres. And his greatest melodies have a similar directness. For all of their innovation, they seem to flow straight out of the rhythms and inflections of everyday speech.

In contrast to many of his fellow pre-rock craftsmen, Berlin lacked a musical signature as distinctive as Porter's recurrent beguine rhythms, Harold Arlen's torchy blues melodies, and Gershwin's jazz harmonies. His ear absorbed many different voices from America's melting pot and blended

them into songs that are as stylistically diverse as 'Alexander's Ragtime Band', 'There's No Business Like Show Business', 'White Christmas' and 'Let's Face the Music and Dance'. These individual masterpieces are each so different from the others that one would not readily guess they all came from the same hand. If they share a single quality, it is a bedrock adherence to a populist songwriting vocabulary that is steady in tone and purged of ornament.

Today's songwriters whose work embodies the American experience have followed Berlin's lead in using that populist vernacular. Bruce Springsteen combines an elemental rock-and-roll vocabulary with a powerful social realism. Stevie Wonder's primal pop-soul plea for peace and racial justice helped to make Dr Martin Luther King Jr's birthday a national holiday. And Paul Simon's visionary fusions of American folk-rock with diverse international styles portray American pop as one vital element in an emerging world music culture.

In today's music industry parlance, 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' would be regarded as the prototypical crossover hit in its blending of the flavor of black ragtime into a Tin Pan Alley format.

"The song revived the by then defunct art of ragtime," the music historian Edward Jablonski remarks in his notes for Feinstein's album. "But Berlin will caution you, 'It is not a rag, it is a song ABOUT ragtime'." To imagine just how radically jazzy and urbanised 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' seemed in its time, one need only contrast the song, with its exuberant syncopation and intense physicality, with the two most popular songs of the day, the sentimental singalong 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart' and the bucolic barbershop tune 'Down by the Old Mill Stream'. In fact, the impact of 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' was roughly equivalent to that of 'Rock Around the Clock' 44 years later.

'There's No Business Like Show Business', from the 1946 show 'Annie Get Your Gun', may be the ultimate uptempo show tune. Its tough, wisecracking lyrics are as tersely all-knowing as its melody, which is nailed down in brassy syncopated lines that have been copied — but never equalled in sheer melodic memorability — by hundreds of theatre composers ever since.

Discussing 'White Christmas' in his book 'American Popular Song', Alec Wilder points out: "So many of Berlin's songs have been played so often that it is easy to forget, bemused as one always is by all things familiar, the truly daring succession of notes in the chromatic phrase of the main strain of 'White Christmas'. Lyrically, the song also evokes a primal nostalgia — a pure childlike longing for roots, home and childhood — that goes way beyond the greeting imagery.

Another of Berlin's gifts has been his ability to custom design songs for specific performers. 'There's No Business Like Show Business' will forever remain Ethel Merman's trademark. 'Let's Face the Music and Dance' and 'Cheek to Cheek' (the longest-running No. 1 hit of the 1930s) defined the musical personality of Fred Astaire, as their melodic lines followed the graceful, sweeping lines of his body in motion.

The ultimate song to express Berlin's deep American roots, 'God Bless America', was first performed on Armistice Day in 1938 by Kate Smith on a radio broadcast, and it quickly went on to become an unofficial US national anthem. This stirring pop march, composed at the end of the Depression, enshrines a strain of official patriotism intertwined with a religious faith that runs deep in the American psyche. Patriotic razzle-dazzle, sophisticated melancholy and humble sentiment: Berlin songs span the emotional terrain of America with a thoroughness that others may have equalled but none have surpassed.

— New York Times

LETTER BOX

From John Edwards, Botany, NSW

Last weekend I had the pleasure of receiving a telephone call from Harry Peters of Chatswood - a Sydney suburb, inviting me to join a gettogether of VBCS members at his home. I met a number of people who were obviously old friends and I was made to feel very welcome by all. I must have behaved myself as I was invited by Hugh McTeigue to the next meeting to be held at his home in June. Crosby people are very nice people.

From Harry Tobias, Sherman Oaks

Many thanks for sending me three extra copies of your club magazine with the Tobias Brothers article. I'm pleased to know that you are acquainted with our songs.

From Graham Pascoe, Bathurst

Reference to the pervasive influence of Bing Crosby on modern music crops up in unexpected places. Singers like Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Dean Martin have not surprised us by acknowledging their indebitness to the Crosby style. But who would have thought that the gravel-voiced Louis Armstrong tried to take a leaf out of Bing's book as he developed his singing career.

Recently I had the great pleasure to read LOUIS ARMSTRONG by James Lincoln Collier (Michael Joseph, London). This fascinating book enthralled me. Analytical, yet moving in its description of Satchmo's life and career, it inspired me to borrow some of Armstrong's records and to read the book a second time.

I have enclosed the pages I have noted, Bob, for your interest. And let me suggest that anyone at all interested in the history of popular music should read Collier's excellent book. But, be warned: have some of Armstrong's 'Hot Fives' and 'Hot Sevens' with you as you read it.

(I can echo Graham's sentiments with great enthusiasm. Jame's Lincoln Collier's book is excellent. Also one of the most accurate when it comes to Louis's life. Do read it if at all possible, I've included extracts featuring Bing on the following page . BM)

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EXTRACT FROM "LOUIS ARMSTRONG
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By 1928, when he was making the last of the great Hot Five sequences, he was singing on virtually every record as well as in the clubs. His future lay as much in his singing as in his trumpet playing, and during this time he decided to try to produce a smoother voice in the tenor range—a generally sweeter vocal style. He was unquestionably influenced by the vogue for sweet tenor voices, the most popular mode of the time. I believe that he was influenced, in particular, by Bing Crosby. Crosby was a baritone, not a tenor, but he had a smooth casual style, which a later generation would have termed "laid back." He had begun to record with the immensely popular Paul Whiteman orchestra in 1929, and by the end of the year he had become a star. Crosby was a drinker, liked jazz and was around the black and tans when he was in Chicago. He and Armstrong had probably met; certainly they were aware of each other as musicians, and Crosby unquestionably took much from Armstrong. Crosby was an obvious model for any young singer—in the end he created a whole school of "crooners," who eddied in his wake. Armstrong already had a penchant for the sweet, as evidenced by his long-standing affection for the Lombardo sound, and around the time he rejoined the Carroll Dickerson band at the Savoy in March 1928, he began experimenting with the new voice. It is possible, too, that he felt that the fancy Savoy called for the smoother singing style.

The smooth style first appears in 1927 on "Put 'Em Down Blues." Armstrong went on to use it regularly on pop ballads, among them such of his early hits as "When You're Smiling," "I Ain't Got Nobody," "Rockin' Chair," and others. He retained the raspy voice for up-tempo or comic numbers. Particularly interesting is his vocal on "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," made in mid-1929. In the middle of the bridge he scats a "babala, babala" figure, which was a Crosby trademark, and then sings "hoppineh, and I geh," a trick of pronunciation which Crosby used to obtain the offhand, relaxed quality he was noted for.

FROM OUT OF THE PAST

COCKTAILS FOR TWO

Just a few days before the start of shooting, the studio had still not found a leading man for Nancy. The part called for a good-looking young fellow in his early twenties who could really sing. A dozen unknowns were tested and discarded. Finally we were up against the wire. The casting director was tearing out his hair. When we played the score for Ben Schulberg, Paramount production head, he said, "Say, you guys ought to know a fellow who can sing and play this part. Any suggestions?"

Sure, I had a suggestion. But I didn't say what it was. I asked Ben if I could do a little checking first, and report back to him in a day or two. "Work fast," said Ben. "We're desperate."

That night I drove to Loew's State Theater in downtown L.A., where Paul Whiteman and his band were headlining the stage show. The Three Rhythm Boys were still Paul's band vocalists. This was just before they joined the Gus Arnheim band at the Cocoanut Grove.

The hunch I had, the one I was not ready to divulge to Schulberg, was that one of the trio, Bing Crosby, was right for the part. I knew Bing well from his New York night club days with Paul. What I wanted to check on was a rumor I'd heard that Bing was ready to leave the band.

I found Bing backstage, and at first I felt him out cautiously. I was not really sure the rumor was accurate. What I had heard was that Bing was somewhat burned up at Whiteman for breaking his promise to give him a solo number in Whiteman's starring film, *The King of Jazz*. All that Bing had in the picture was a brief appearance as one of the Rhythm Boys.

I was right. Bing was ready to leave the band for a real part in a movie. He was confident he could get by with it. Acting didn't seem like such a tough chore.

"All right," I said, "I'll try to get them to come down here and catch your show. How much should I say you want?"

Bing hesitated for a moment. Then he mumbled something about "Two hundred a week. That's what Paul pays me. I wouldn't want to take a cut. And it would have to be a term deal. After all, I have a steady job with this outfit." Bing spurted it all out rather apologetically. I could see he was afraid he was asking for too much.

I said I didn't think two hundred would be any problem, if I could only sell the studio on him.

"What about Harry and Al?" Harry and Al were the other two Rhythm Boys.

"They could fit right in, too," I replied. "The script has a few band sequences and we'll need some band vocals."

Next evening, on my suggestion, Schulberg sent down a couple of Paramount talent scouts to Loew's State to catch Bing. For about 24 hours, he was under consideration. But the following day they auditioned a young actor named Stanley Smith. He couldn't sing very well, but somehow he got the part—don't ask me how. It was a big letdown for me, since I had a couple of real Crosby songs in the score. Stanley turned out to be a pretty fair actor, and he photographed well. But he certainly couldn't handle those songs.

This story had an ironic twist for Paramount. Stanley never did set the world afire, and the studio eventually dropped him. But a year or so later, they put Bing under a longterm contract, for in the meantime he had become one of the country's radio idols. But they were obliged to pay him not the $200 a week they could have had him for, but $50,000 a picture, with options that eventually ran his salary up to hundreds of thousands. But, as Sidney Skolsky always said, don't get me wrong—I love Hollywood.

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It was natural that a number of other pop singers began to copy Crosby's crooning style. Most were quickly dismissed as bad imitators by the radio critics. One of the few who made it was the late and great Russ Columbo. By a quirk of fate, I was involved in the start of that career too. And in a most hilarious way, I thought.

Russ was one of the first people I had met when I arrived in Hollywood. He was then a "mood music" violinist, a holdover from the silent film days. Mood musicians are an extinct breed today, but in those days they were indispensable on every shooting set. With no sound yet being recorded, they played whatever music was necessary to provide inspiration for the scene. If Mary Pickford had a weeping scene, for example, a pianist and violinist were right behind the camera playing the saddest music they could think of. In a love scene, they would help the lovers emote with a chorus of "Kiss Me Again." And so forth. There were still a few of them around when sound first arrived, since many of the stars' closeups were still being shot silent. Columbo worked as a team with pianist Solly Biano (later head casting director for Warner Brothers), and during my early days at Paramount they were still mooding it up for Clara Bow and Evelyn Brent, who always demanded their presence on the set.

But by late 1930, most of the mood musicians were out of work, victims of technological progress. Russ found work with several dance bands, doubling as violinist and vocalist. For a brief time, he worked with the Arnheim band at the Grove, one of the musicians backing Bing Crosby's solos. Russ himself had a very soft, barely audible singing voice that you couldn't hear ten feet away. But on a mike something magical happened. Amplified, the same faint voice suddenly had quality, feeling, and a remarkably smooth way of phrasing the lyrics. Russ soon put aside his fiddle —he never was much of a threat to Heifetz or Kreisler—and concentrated on his vocalizing, changing jobs frequently.

He was an incredibly handsome young man, with features that reminded you of Valentino. So I was not surprised when I found him on a Paramount set one day playing a small part that called for Russ to sing a song or two. After the first day's rushes were screened, the studio executives decided he photographed like a million dollars and ordered his part built up to a more important role. But no singing! Russ just mouthed the lyrics, while a singer who hasn't been heard from since dubbed the actual songs. Russ, of course, went on to become the second great new singing star of the early Thirties, outranked only by Crosby. Which I suppose proves something about the judgment of Hollywood's powers that be.

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When Bing began clicking on network radio from New York, Russ changed his style. From a straight whispering baritone he became a Crosby-style crooner, adopting many of Bing's vocal tricks; the same slurring and sliding up to a note, the whole works. The Crosby style was in and had created a big vogue, and Russ was now singing it for local consumption on independent radio stations around Los Angeles. He was by far the best of all the Crosby imitators, and he soon built up a strong local following.

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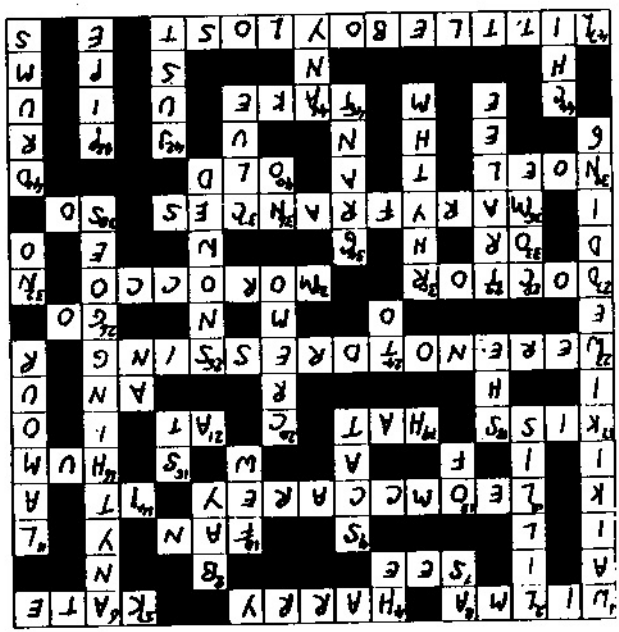
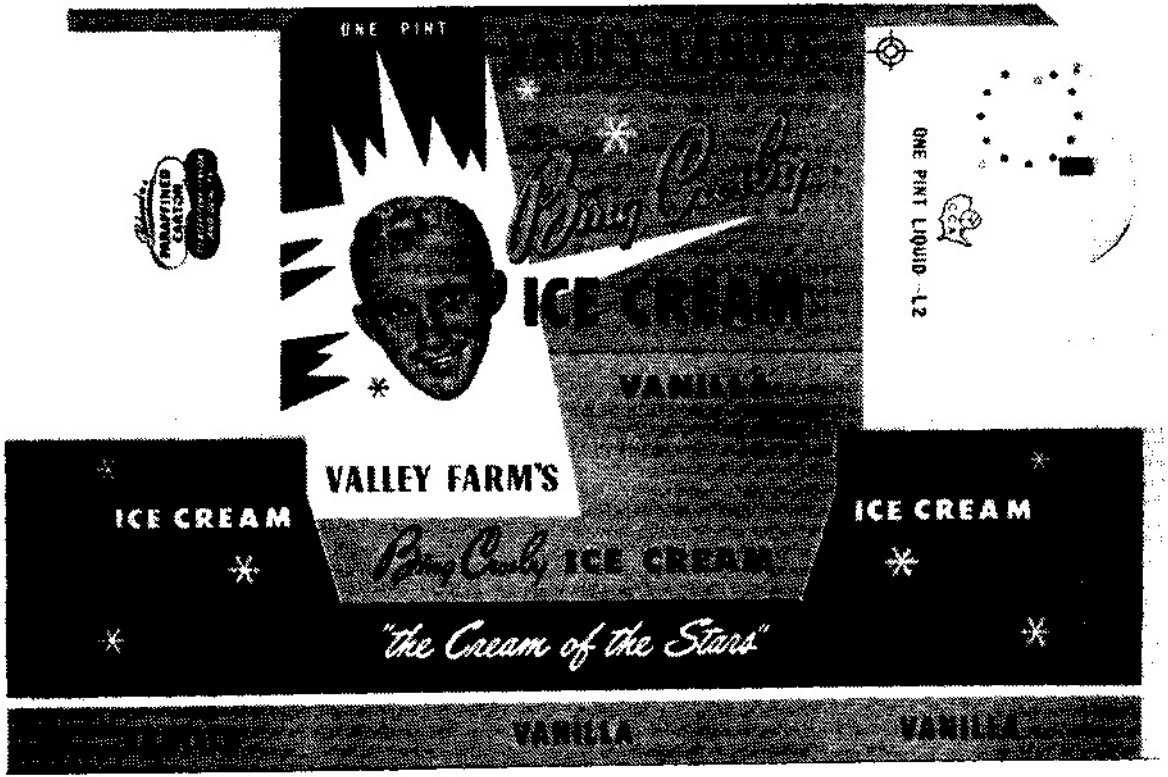


And that's where we'll leave this issue of The Crosby Voice. I hope that you found something of interest in the preceeding pages. Next issue, hopefully, will be ON TIME! Best wishes.

Bob Hackbarth

Mark Scrimger supplied what must be one of the most unusual examples ever of Crosbyana for our 'Back Page Special' this issue. An actual wrapper from Bing Crosby Ice Cream! No doubt this items goes back to the days when Bing was the 'flavour of the month'!!!